



SISTER M. LETITIA MATTEUCCI
November 22, 1929 - December 24, 2008

This morning you are invited to listen to a story of a devoted Sister of Charity for fifty-six years, Sister Letitia Matteucci. Zelma Marietta was born November 22, 1929, to Vincent and Mary (Pellegrini) Matteucci. Her parents were born in Luca, Italy and they met in the United States where they were married.

Zelma was the youngest of three children. Her brother Vincent was the oldest followed by her sister Leatrice, fondly known as Lee.

We welcome Vincent and Audrey and Lee and John Bridge along with her many nieces and nephews who were the pride and joy of Sister Letitia as she proudly shared her Italian heritage with them.

Zelma Marietta Matteucci was first drawn to religious life while in St. Catherine Parish in Beechview. She attended South Hills High School for two years than transferred to Elizabeth Seton. Following graduation, she was employed at the Bell Telephone for five years in the accounting department. On December 8, 1952, Resurrection parish Pastor, Father John Quinn recommended Zelma to the Sisters of Charity with these words, "This is to testify that Zelma Marietta Matteucci is a young lady of excellent character, a good Catholic and possessed of the natural virtues of honesty, truthfulness, simplicity, humility, kindness, cooperation and trustworthiness." Zelma stated that "her father was one of the strongest influences in her life noting that he was strong and kind, hard-working and devoted to duty. His work as a chef and restaurant manager eventually led Sister Letitia to her career in food services.

Although her best friend, Mary Lou O'Connor, entered the Sisters of Charity with her and later transferred to the Poor Clare community, Sister Letitia continued in her journey as a Sister of Charity with novitiate training and opportunities for teaching at Holy Cross in Youngwood, Holy Rosary in Juniata, Saint Mary School in Chandler, Arizona, and Saint Luke School in Carnegie.

Guided by Sister Rose Angela Cunningham's leadership, Sister Letitia began working toward her license in Dietetics at Seton Hill College in 1958 and in 1962. She completed an internship at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Cincinnati where she received the *Sister Romuald Merit Award* as the most outstanding dietetic intern. Her journey continued from Seton Hill to Pittsburgh Hospital and then to Jeannette Hospital. She ministered at Assumption Hall from 1970-1982 and nothing was too much for the sisters she served.

Sister Letitia moved to St. James in Wilkinsburg in 1982, was employed by Columbia Hospital and then moved to the new Forbes Hospital.

In her autobiography, Sister Letitia wrote about her mother in these words, "My mother's love for the Blessed Virgin Mary was passed on to me. I know several instances when Our Lady has helped and sustained me in difficult times."

When Sister Letitia retired with 20 years as “*The Dietician*,” this love and devotion to the Blessed Mother inspired her to yet another new beginning in her next 20 years in chaplaincy. She began her clinical pastoral education with Rev. Gene Reddel from the Veteran’s Administration Hospital in Highland Park and she took her second course from Rev. Charlie Starr at Shadyside Hospital thus earning her certification in the National Association of Catholic Chaplains.

From 1987 to 2006 she provided quality pastoral care at Torrance State Hospital under Rev. Bill Hufford. During her last three years she served as a volunteer chaplain.

In a tribute to Sister Letitia during 1989 Mental Illness Awareness Week, Sister was honored in *The Catholic Accent* as “one who could treat with dignity as she simply listened and allowed others to share their pain and respect and dignity is a special Encounter with God.”

“Sister Letitia described her ministry with these words, “As I listen to patients expressing their suffering, I feel Christ’s love and compassion for them. Their suffering becomes a personal concern to me as I comfort and support them.”

Sister Barbara Einloth describes Sister Letitia’s ministry transition from dietetics to chaplaincy in these words, “Sister Letitia made a significant shift in her life because of her desire to do more with people, direct and faith-related ministry. Sister Letitia has offered a variety of methods of treating and delivering pastoral care to mentally ill patients. She continues to love her work and finds it dynamic. Because of her enthusiasm and attention, the people at Torrance experience the Charity of Christ in tangible ways.”

In 2006 our Sister Letitia moved to Caritas Christi where she continued to make a difference in the lives of the sisters and staff. “Tish, it is a beautiful feeling to feel God work through you with a person-the joy of that experience balances the sadness and we will miss you.”

During this Christmas season, we celebrate Sister Letitia’s life by recalling the story of *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. “Once there was a tree . . . and she loved a little boy. Every day the boy would come to the tree to eat her apples, swing from her branches, or slide down her trunk . . . and the tree was happy. But as the boy grew older he began to want more from the tree, and the tree gave and gave and gave.”

This tender story is touched with sadness, aglow with consolation. It offers us, like Sister Letitia, an interpretation of the gift of giving and a serene acceptance of another’s capacity to love in return.

We thank you, Letitia, for your endless care and giving and we celebrate your life as we give you to God during this season of giving and receiving endless love.

Funeral Liturgy Reflection
Sister Thomas Joseph Gaines

December 27, 2008

